

## GENDER MAINSTREAMING: CONCEPT AND SIGNIFICANCES

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### ABSTRACT

*Gender inequality has been seen in educational institutions. Compared to their male counterparts, girls have experienced more discrimination in a variety of areas. Participation has been the main area where gender inequality has been felt. In educational institutions, participation by students is essential in a variety of activities. Gender inequality was more prevalent since girls were given less opportunities for participation than their male counterparts. In contrast to metropolitan areas, this issue has been more acute in rural areas. Gender inequality in education is seen as the main barrier to the general development of the educational system. In the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) women and girls are underrepresented. Men predominating in STEM-related professions and women find it challenging to compete with them in these industries. About 28% of engineering graduates are women, and only 1 in 5 experts in domains like artificial intelligence are female, according to a 2022 World Bank report. Stereotypes and gender bias are among the main factors that discourage women from considering professions in STEM fields. Among the difficult reasons why women in STEM encounter difficulties are pressure to fit in with societal norms, forced marriages, and motherhood. The majority of homes are headed by women, and this responsibility sometimes prevents them from pursuing their ideal careers. In general, there is a hurdle in the way of women pursuing successful jobs in their areas of interest. Women's education is frequently cited as being crucial to the welfare of families and nations. There is still a long way to go even though things are getting better. Thus, it is crucial to develop policies and initiatives through gender mainstreaming that place an emphasis on giving girls equal rights and opportunities, not only in the context of acquiring education but also in the execution of other job responsibilities. Gender Mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/ dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.*

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**Keywords:** Gender, Inequality, Gender- Mainstreaming.

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### Introduction

*When women thrive, all of society benefits, and succeeding generations are given a better start in life.*

-- Kofi Annan

Since the 14th century, the word "gender" has generally been used as a grammatical term to refer to the noun classes in Latin, Greek, German, and other languages that are classified as masculine, feminine, or neuter. It has also been used to refer to "the state of being male or female" since the 14th century, but this usage did not become common until the middle of the 20th century. While having the same meaning as "the state of being male or female," the words gender and sex are often employed in significantly different ways: Gender typically refers to cultural or social differences, whereas sex typically refers to biological ones.

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Gender is referred to as the social and cultural conceptions of duties, obligations, traits, attitudes, and beliefs towards men and women, including children and the elderly. These roles and connections are acquired via experience, evolve over time, and differ greatly within and between cultures.

Gender is a construct of society. The roles, rights, obligations, and differences between men and women are defined. Women and men have differing access to rights, resources, and power in society as a result of how society interprets the inherent biological distinctions between genders. These societal expectations dictate the behaviours that are proper for men and women. Although the precise nature and extent of these inequalities vary from society to society, they largely favour men, leading to a power imbalance and gender inequality that is present in the majority of societies around the world.

#### **What Gender Equality Means**

According to the UN (2002), *"equality is the cornerstone of every democratic society that aspires to social justice and human rights."*

The phrase "gender equality" has been defined in several ways in the literature on development and has been the focus of intense discussion in the UN. It frequently refers to women having the same chances as males, such as access to school and employment, however this does not always translate into equality of outcomes. Conceptual frameworks for comprehending gender equality have been offered by a number of specialists.

In terms of capabilities (education, health, and nutrition), gender equality (economic and decision-making) is included in the United Nations Human Development Report (1995).

The World Bank defines gender equality as having the same rights under the law, having the same opportunities (including equal pay for equal work and equal access to human capital and other productive resources that create opportunity), and having the same voice (the ability to influence and contribute to the development process).

From these frames, three fundamental areas of equality between men and women emerge:

- Competencies,
- Resource and Opportunity Access,
- Agency or the Power to Influence
  - Basic human capacities are measured by education, health, and nutrition in the capability's domain. In order to achieve equality in the other two realms, it is also the most fundamental of the three.
  - The second domain, access to resources and opportunities, generally refers to equality in the ability to use or put to use fundamental abilities through access to financial resources and assets (such land and property) (such as income and employment).
  - The concept of empowerment is defined by its third domain, agency, which is the capacity to make decisions that can affect results. The only way to achieve gender equality in this field is to balance the power between men and women in the home and social organizations.

There are connections between these three equality domains. It is not enough to make progress in one area at the expense of another to achieve gender equality. The three areas are related, although they are not necessarily interdependent. In order to increase their agency and affect outcomes for themselves and their family, illiterate women may, for example, organise. Unsurprisingly, women then utilise their agency to demand opportunity and capability (better health or education) (access to decent work). Similarly, as is seen in many Middle Eastern nations, women with talents (as determined by schooling) may not have access to economic opportunities.

#### **What Gender Inequality Means**

In terms of capabilities (education, health, and nutrition), gender equality is included in the United Nations Human Development Report (1995). (economic and decision-making). According to the World Bank, gender equality is defined as having equal rights under the law, equal opportunities (including equal pay for equal work and equal access to human capital and other productive resources that create opportunities), and equal voice (the ability to influence and contribute to the development process).

Mortality, natality, basic amenities, special opportunities, profession, ownership, and household are the various manifestations of gender disparity.

Due to prejudice in familial and societal institutions, as well as social, cultural, and religious standards that uphold practices and ideas that are harmful to women, gender inequality persists (Amartya Sen, 2001)

### **Gender Mainstreaming**

A widely accepted technique for advancing gender equality is gender mainstreaming. In order to attain the aim of gender equality, mainstreaming serves as a strategy, an approach, and a means rather than an end in itself. Putting gender perspectives and the pursuit of gender equality at the centre of all activities, including policy creation, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation, and monitoring of projects and programmes, is known as mainstreaming.

The Third World Congress on Women in Nairobi in 1985 is where the idea of gender mainstreaming was first introduced. The United Nations Beijing Conference accepted gender mainstreaming in 1995, and the European Union (EU) later adopted it in the Treaty of Amsterdam. Gender mainstreaming originated in development policies (Morley 2007). Globally, more than 100 nations have included GM into their political systems.

Since 1997, it has been the responsibility of the Assistant Secretary-General and Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women to support and monitor the execution of the policy directives. Since UN Women's involvement in this context must necessarily be primarily supportive and consultative, the Special Adviser on Gender Mainstreaming's mission encompasses the entire UN system. Monitoring and reporting on progress with gender mainstreaming is a crucial extra component. Two professionals who work in the office are committed to promoting gender equality.

The United Nations defines Gender Mainstreaming as:

The process of evaluating the effects on men and women of any planned action, including laws, policies, or programs, in all areas and at all levels, is known as gender mainstreaming, according to the United Nations( ECOSOC 1997).

In order to ensure that both men and women benefit equally and that inequality is not sustained, it is a strategy to incorporate the concerns and experiences of both genders into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic, and societal spheres. Being gender equal is the ultimate goal. (1997, ECOSOC)

### **Mandate of Gender Mainstreaming**

The results of the General Assembly special session to follow up on the Beijing Conference significantly increased the mandate for gender mainstreaming (June 2000). Governments are not being forced to implement gender mainstreaming by the UN. Since the middle of the 1990s, member states have participated in intergovernmental debates on gender mainstreaming and have unanimously accepted mainstreaming as a significant worldwide strategy for promoting gender equality.

Targeted initiatives to support women are still required notwithstanding the mainstreaming plan. These initiatives explicitly address the interests and goals of women, for instance through enacting laws, developing policies, conducting research, and implementing projects and programmes. Projects that focus specifically on women, continue to be crucial in the fight for gender equality. They are still required since gender mainstreaming processes have not yet been fully evolved and gender equality has not yet been achieved. The reduction of existing gaps, acting as a catalyst for the promotion of gender equality, and building a constituency for changing the status quo are all aided by targeted programmes that particularly target women or the promotion of gender equality. Women-specific programmes can empower women and serve as a vital incubator for concepts and tactics that can be applied to more general interventions. Men-focused initiatives help the advancement of gender equality by creating male allies. It is important to realize that gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment are not at all antagonistic to one another. The acceptance of gender mainstreaming inside a company does not mean that focused efforts are no longer required. In a very real sense, the two approaches complement one another since gender mainstreaming must be done in a way that empowers women.

### **The Fundamentals of Gender Mainstreaming**

According to Lombardo (2005) and Charlesworth (2005), it is appropriate to establish a few needs and principles that enable gender mainstreaming to be recognised:

- **A Broader Definition of Gender Equality**

This demand for a more comprehensive approach to gender policy in order to address the linked causes of uneven gender relations in many aspects of life (work, politics, sexuality, culture and male violence).

- **Integration of a Gender Perspective into the Political Agenda**

Gender concerns should be addressed in all policy sectors. There must be proof that the mainstream political agenda has been reoriented by reconsidering policy aims and tactics in terms of gender.] Gender mainstreaming implementation is a system-wide task that falls at the highest levels. Responsibility for outcomes must be regularly monitored.

- **Women's Involvement and Participation in Decision Making**

Gender equality necessitates equal representation of men and women in decision-making institutions. Every effort should be made to increase women's participation in decision-making at all levels.

- **Prioritizing Gender Equality Goals and Creating Policies Relevant to Women**

There should be proof that the organization emphasized gender equality and policies of special importance to women (for example, social policy) over competing aims (in terms of financial and human resources, type of measures adopted and more). Gender mainstreaming does not eliminate the necessity for women-specific policies and programmes, as well as positive legislation.

- **Institutional and organizational culture shifts**

This modification includes three components:

- The policy process is restructured such that ordinary actors understand how to incorporate a gender viewpoint or gender knowledge is made a standard prerequisite for policymakers.
- A shift in policy mechanism entails: I implementing organizational cooperation on gender issues across all policy areas, levels, and departments.
- ii) The application of suitable policy instruments and methodologies to incorporate the gender variable into all policies, as well as to monitor and assess all policies from a gender viewpoint.
- Gender mainstreaming must be integrated throughout the company through tangible measures, methods, and processes.
- The range of players involved in policymaking is expanded to include gender experts and civic society

### **Tools for Gender Mainstreaming**

According to Beck and Stelcner (1997), tools for Gender Mainstreaming are

- **Gender-disaggregated statistics**

- The foundation of any gender mainstreaming strategy
- Improved knowledge of gender disparities
- enables the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming policies
- To serve as a gauge of progress

- **Equality indicators:** GDI, GEM etc

- **Budgets devised:** Gender budget work provides information that enables better decision-making on how policies and priorities should be updated, as well as the resources required to achieve gender equality.

- **Gender impact analyses:** It assists policymakers in adopting a gender perspective into policies that take into account the various requirements, features, and behaviours of the users to whom they are directed.

- **Gender surveillance:**

- Identify variations in beliefs, attitudes, access to and control over resources, economic opportunities, and power and political influence between men and women.

- Evaluate the impact of projects, programmes, and policies on the perceived meaning of being a man or a woman, as well as gender relations in the home, community, economy, and society.
- **Gender Audit:** It serves as a tool for organizational planning through a participatory self-evaluation process.

#### **Gender Mainstreaming at Various Stages (Rai, 2004)**

- Determine how the status quo is built with men in mind.
- Make systems more inclusive of men and women;
- Develop a strategy or methodology to incorporate gender perspectives

#### **Major Criticism toward Gender Mainstreaming**

- **Gender mainstreaming has not boosted female participation in decision-making**

Progress in the most easily observable area, the hiring of women in professional and managerial positions at the United Nations, has been sluggish. Women held 37.4% of these posts in 2012. The annual growth rate towards the 50% target is expected to be 0.4%. On top of this slow growth, there is a significant gender hierarchy. Women had 83.3% of posts at the lowest professional level, P-1, but only 16.7% of positions at the highest staff level in 2012. In a similar line, Lombardo (2011) estimates that in 2009-10, women represented just 20% of the representatives of the member states' heads of state or government, 10% of the representatives of national parliaments, 31.25% of the representatives of the European Parliament, and so on.

- **Inadequate gender mainstreaming implementation**

Although it has not been difficult to encourage the use of mainstreaming vocabulary, there is little evidence of monitoring or follow-up. The translation of commitment into action has been a recurring issue for all organizations that have adopted gender mainstreaming. Development is uneven, and there are evidence of gender mainstreaming fatigue inside the UN, owing to a lack of appropriate training and support. A review of gender mainstreaming policy as implemented by the UNDP, World Bank, and ILO discovered insufficient budgeting for gender components of projects, insufficient analytical skill development, poor supervision of gender component implementation, and a general lack of political commitment both within the organisation and at the country level.

- **Past Achievements are being harmed**

According to Stratigaki (2005), constructive activity was sidelined after the advent of gender mainstreaming due to the specific way GM was employed by opponents of gender equality. Almost all gender mainstreaming analyses agree that it is a method that supplements, but does not replace, earlier gender-specific equality measures such as equal treatment and positive action. Yet, in hostile gender equality policy environments, GM may be conceived and deployed as an alternative to positive action, undermining the ultimate goal of gender equality.

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- **Markers that is Responsive to Gender**

- Show how gender relations have changed through time in a specific society.
- Used to analyse progress towards gender equality by tracking changes in the status of men and women through time.

Gender-sensitive indicators can be used to measure the progress of a specific development intervention towards greater gender equality.

Gender-sensitive indicators can be classified as follows:

- The resultant quality to be attained
- The amount of anything that must be obtained;
- The target group who is affected or benefiting from the programme or initiative; and
- The time limit for achieving the objectives (FAO 2001).

### **Gender Empowerment Measure**

- The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) was created to assess "whether women and men can actively engage in economic and political life and make decisions." (UNDP, 1995)
- The GEM assesses gender inequality in three areas:
  - political involvement and decision-making (female share of parliament seats);
  - economic participation and decision-making (female share of technical and professional, administrative and managerial positions); and
  - power over economic resources (earned income).

### **History of GEM**

- In 1995, the United Nations Development Program commissioned the Human Development Report, which set out to construct two new measurement indices for assessing development.
- Their goal was to improve the Human Development Index by introducing a gender factor.
- Haq, the first director of the Human Development Report Office, established several principals for the newly emerging measure including provisions that it
  - It had to be easy,
  - had to be expressed as a single number
  - had should be simple to calculate
  - required to produce figures that were comparable on a global scale
  - had to rely on numbers provided on a yearly basis and
  - It was necessary to select numbers that were clearly understood.
- The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure were developed as a result (GEM). The GEM, the more specialists of the two, is concerned with indicating the level of women's empowerment in a certain country.

### **Criticisms of GEM**

- They are extremely specialised, difficult to read, and sometimes misinterpreted;
- they do not provide appropriate cross-country comparisons; and they attempt to incorporate too many development aspects into a single metric.
- GEM, in particular, is thought to indicate an elite bias. It has been accused of focusing mostly on the upper echelons of society and assessing inequality solely among the most educated and economically advantaged women.
- Many of the indicators in the GEM do not have publicly available statistical data. As a result, the GEM is only trustworthy for more developed countries that gather those statistics.
- It is also frequently stated that the number of women in parliament is not an accurate indicator of gender empowerment advancement in a given country because feminists are typically viewed as political liabilities, and as a result, female politicians do not always represent female interests.
- Another complaint levelled about the GEM is that it fails to address the subject of female autonomy over their bodies and sexuality, which some say is an important source of female empowerment and should be included in the measure.
- Furthermore, the GEM has been chastised for being significantly too reliant on the income component of the assessment in determining the total GEM score.

### **Gender Development Index**

The Gender-related Development Index (GDI), which has been published annually in the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Report (HDR) since 1995, is intended to identify gender differences in human development.

The Human Development Index (GDI), a variant of the HDI, is a composite indicator used to rank human well-being across 140 countries. Life expectancy, adult literacy, school enrollment, and income per capita are all allocated a penalty based on the amount of gender disparity in a given country before being merged in a formula similar to HDI. The discrepancy between HDI and GDI might be seen as a penalty for gender inequality. GDI is thus neither a measure of women's development nor of gender

inequality, but rather a measure of human development that includes health, education, and income, as well as the extent to which a society's well-being suffers as a result of any gender disparity in access to these three proxies for human capabilities.

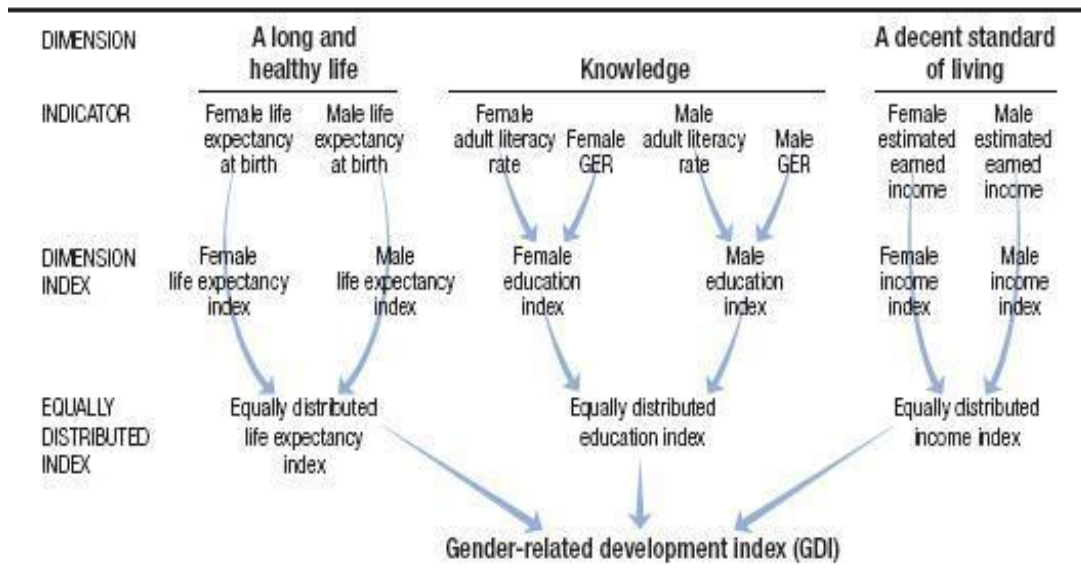
The theme of the UNDP reports was gender differentiation in achievement, inequality between men and women, or the outcome of development. The Human Development Report -1995 (UNDP) addresses the critical subject of gender-based "discrimination" in terms and aspects that represent women's current perspectives.

To paraphrase:

*"For far too long, it was supposed that development was a process that lifted all boats, that its advantages trickled down to all income classes—and that its influence was gender-neutral." Experience has taught us otherwise. Large wealth disparities and gender inequities confront us in all cultures... Advancing towards gender equality is a political process, not a technological goal. It necessitates a shift in thinking, in which gender stereotypes give way to a new philosophy that sees all people, regardless of gender, as crucial agents of change... The unrelenting fight for gender equality will alter the majority of today's social, economic, and political assumptions."*

**Calculation of Gender Development Index**

The GDI is frequently referred to as a "gender-sensitive extension of the HDI" (Klasen 245). It focuses on gender disparities in life expectancy, education, and income. It employs a "inequality aversion" penalty, which generates a development score penalty for gender inequalities in any of the Human Development Index categories, including life expectancy, adult literacy, school enrollment, and logarithmic transformations of per-capita income. In terms of life expectancy, the GDI predicts that women will outlive males by five years on average. Furthermore, the GDI takes into account income inequalities in terms of real earned income. The GDI cannot be utilized independently of the Human Development Index (HDI) score and so cannot be used as an indication of gender gaps on its own. Only the difference between the HDI and the GDI can be examined appropriately; the GDI is not an independent measure of gender gaps.



Source: UNDP Report

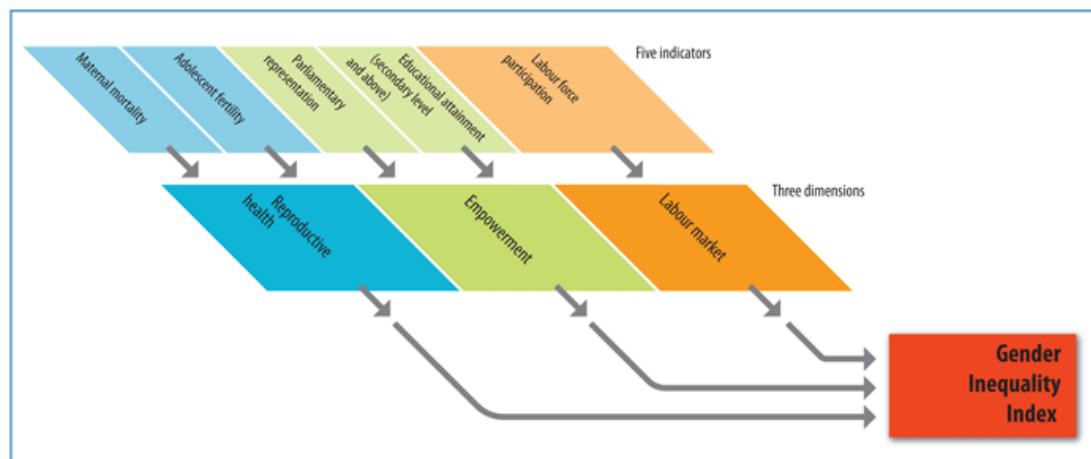
**Gender Inequality Index (GII)**

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) measures women's disadvantage in three areas: reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation. The index depicts the lost opportunities for human development as a result of gender disparities in various aspects. It ranges from 0, indicating that men and women perform equally, to 1, indicating that women perform as poorly as possible in all measured categories. Two variables are used to assess the health dimension: maternal mortality rate and teen

fertility rate. Empowerment rates are also quantified using two indicators: the proportion of parliamentary seats held by each gender and levels of secondary and higher education attainment. The labour dimension is measured by women's labor-force participation. The Gender Inequality Index is intended to illustrate the extent to which women's labor-force participation is dimensioned. GII is intended to demonstrate the extent to which gender disparity undermines national successes in these areas of human development, as well as to provide empirical foundations for policy analysis and advocacy initiatives.

#### Components of the Gender Inequality Index

GI—three dimensions and five indicators



Note: The size of the boxes reflects the relative weights of the indicators and dimensions.

Source: HDRO.

#### Patterns of Inequality

Because no country has perfect gender disparity, all countries incur some loss in HDI accomplishment when gender inequality is considered using the GII metric. In contrast to HDI, higher GII levels indicate inferior achievement. The global average score on the GII is 0.492, indicating a 49.2% reduction in achievement across the three areas owing to gender disparity. Averages vary by region, ranging from 31% in Europe and Central Asia to 61% in Sub-Saharan Africa. Gender inequality causes losses ranging from 4.9% in Sweden to 76.9% in Yemen. Gender disparity causes the greatest losses in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Gulf States (61%, 60.1% and 56.3%) Regional patterns show that reproductive health is the most significant contributor to global gender inequality, with women in Sub-Saharan Africa suffering the most in this dimension (73% loss), followed by South Asia (65.9% loss), the Arab States, and Latin America and the Caribbean (both with 62.5% loss). Both the Gulf States and South Asia have relatively low levels of female empowerment.

#### Sources of data used for GII

The Gender Inequality Index relies on data from major publicly available databases, including the maternal mortality ratio from UNICEF's The State of the World's Children; adolescent fertility rates from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' World's Population Prospects; educational attainment statistics from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics educational attainment tables and the Barro-Lee data sets; parliamentary representation from the International Parliamentary Union; and labour market participation from the International Labour Organisation's LABOURSTA database

#### Conclusion

- Throughout the last few decades, developing nations have achieved significant advancements in educating women and enhancing their health. According to the World Bank, women's life expectancy has increased by 15 years on average since 1970, and there are less differences between the sexes in terms of literacy and primary education (2001).
- Though frequently utilised, the concept of gender mainstreaming is only loosely understood and imperfectly implemented (Morley, 2007)



- Development strategy needs to focus on enhancing the status of women in developing nations, particularly in terms of family, identity, and health. Thanks to the new measurements, it is possible to conduct more thorough examination of the connection between gender inequality and economic growth.
- Women have made great strides, but there is still a long way to go.

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